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SUBJECT: Damascus Media Reaction: Syria/Bahrain, Syria/UAE,
Syria/Argentina, Palestinian Territories, Iraq, Lebanon (6/9-11)

¶1. Summary: Syrian papers reported the visit to Syria by King
Hamad Bin-Isa Al Khalifah of Bahrain and his talks with
President Asad. Both leaders stressed their support for the

Palestinian people's legitimate rights and the establishment of
their independent state, with Jerusalem as its capital, and
called for an end to the suffering of the Palestinian people.
They also stressed their eagerness for security and stability in
Iraq and the region and for foreign threats to be warded off.

Papers also reported the visit to Damascus by former German
Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder and his meeting with President
Asad, that focused on the Syrian-UAE Economic Forum currently
being held in Damascus and prospects for investment in Syria.
President Asad and Mr. Schroeder stressed that establishing
security in the region will lead to economic revival. The
situations in Iraq and the occupied Palestinian territories, as
well as the issue of terrorism and fighting it, relations
between Europe and the region and Europe's political role in it
were also discussed in the meeting. President Asad discussed
with participants in the Syrian-UAE Economic Forum prospects of
investment in Syria and the role of infrastructure in attracting
investment. The President and participants in the Forum stressed
that Syria has been proceeding with modernization despite the
conditions through which the region is passing. President Asad
was briefed on the visions presented by investors in Syrian
investment projects and how to benefit from the experience of
other Arab countries in this field. The delegation voiced the
UAE's interest in enhancing existing relations with Syria in all
fields, particularly in the economic sector.

Government-owned Tishreen on (6/10) reported a lecture delivered
at the Foreign Relations Institute in Argentina (6/8) by Deputy
Foreign Minister Faisal al-Miqdad, who reviewed Syria's
positions toward the various events and developments in the
Middle East and Syria's pivotal role in the region. Al-Miqdad
said, "it is very clear that the amount of pressure that Syria
is coming under as a result of its firm and principled positions
is in itself an indication of the important role that Syria
plays in the region, a role whose importance goes beyond the
borders of the region." The deputy FM said: "Israel's
persistence in its hostile policies against Palestinians, its

construction of the racial segregation wall, and the tricks in which its leaders are engaged are aimed at deluding the world into thinking that this wall is meant only to prevent individuals from crossing, when the fact is that they consider this wall, in their unilateral plan, to be the final border." Al-Miqdad discussed the mistakes of American policy and the political double standards that the United States pursues in the region. He said: "Washington's position toward the results of the recent Palestinian elections shows the shortsightedness and mistakes of this policy. This also applies to US plans regarding Iraq and the chaos they have produced." Al-Miqdad stressed Syria's full readiness to strengthen national cohesion in Iraq and to establish diplomatic relations with that country. On relations with Lebanon, Dr. Al-Miqdad said: "Syria offered many sacrifices to stop the civil war, which destroyed Lebanon's infrastructure and fragmented its society. Syria sent its Army for this purpose at the request of the Lebanese themselves."

Government-owned Tishreen featured an official Syrian statement denying a report published in the Lebanese newspaper Sada al-Balad on Wednesday (7 June) citing Israeli newspaper Ha'aretz to the effect that the Syrian PM asked the European Union to mediate with the Israeli government to resume negotiations on the Syrian track. Although peace is Syria's strategic option, the source said, this report is completely baseless and unfounded. Tishreen also cited a Syrian Foreign Ministry statement strongly denouncing the massacre that the Israeli occupation forces perpetrated against innocent civilians on the Gaza seashore. It also condemned the acts of violence and aggression that Israel continues to commit against the Palestinian people. The source urged all concerned Palestinian leaders to foil this plan through firm adherence to their national unity.

Government-owned Al-Thawra on (6/9) reported Foreign Minister

Walid al-Mouallem's meeting with Khalid Mish'al, Chairman of the HAMAS Political Bureau. Talks dealt with the current Palestinian situation. FM al-Mouallem stressed that the leadership and people of Syria are eager to make every possible effort to strengthen Palestinian national unity, lift the unjust siege on the Palestinian people, and continue support for the Palestinian democratic option. For his part, Mish'al expressed appreciation for President Asad's position and efforts to ensure the rights of the Palestinian people and achieve their national unity. He stressed that HAMAS is determined to continue with the inter-Palestinian dialogue on the basis of the Palestinian prisoners' document and to block every attempt to harm Palestinian national unity.

End of summary.

12. Selected Headlines:

"Under the patronage of President Asad, the 2nd session of the Syrian-UAE Economic Forum opens in Damascus. President Asad reviews with participants in the Syrian-UAE Economic Forum and former German Chancellor Schroeder prospects for investment in Syria and the necessity of achieving security and stability in the region to encourage economic growth. Deputy Prime Minister for Economic Affairs, Dardari: Syrian economy has achieved important success. Schroeder: Syria is integrating into the global economy and German investments will increase. Head of the Economic Department in Sharja, al-Qasemi: We are interested in investment in Syria. Al-Abbar, Head of the Board of UAE Immar Company: The Immar Company has not asked the Syrian government for any guarantees before launching investment in Syria. Kuzbari, Member of the Administration Council of the Syrian Business Council in Dubai, calls for modification of Investment Law No. 10 of 1991. Shallah, Chairman of Syrian Chambers of Commerce, calls on expatriates to invest in Syria. The Syrian-UAE Committee wraps up its activities and calls for eliminating obstacles and for implementation of agreements" (Government-owned Tishreen, 6/11)

"President Asad discusses regional developments, issues of common concern and mutual coordination in all fields with King Hamad of Bahrain. President Asad and King Hamad emphasize concern about

maintaining Iraq's independence and supporting the Palestinian people" (Government-owned Al-Thawra, 6/9)

"A message from President Asad to the Argentinean President conveyed by Deputy FM Faisal al-Miqdad: Syria appreciates Argentina's support of Arab rights" (Government-owned Tishreen, 6/10)

"Under the patronage of President Asad, activities of the second Syrian-Emirates Economic Forum kick off today" (Government-owned Tishreen, 6/10)

"Syria denies asking the EU to mediate for resumption of peace negotiations on the Syrian track" (Government-owned Tishreen, 6/10)

"Deputy Foreign Minister Miqdad lectures at the Argentinean Foreign Relations Institute. The amount of pressure on Syria indicates its important and pivotal role in the region; Washington's policy is marked by double standards and shortsightedness" (Government-owned Tishreen, 6/10)

"Foreign minister Mouallem discusses current developments with Hamas leader Khaled Mish'al: Syria is keen for Palestinian national unity" (Government-owned Al-Thawra, 6/9)

"A long terrorist day. Israel shells picnickers on a beach in the northern Gaza Strip. Ten killed, 40 wounded. President of the Palestinian National Authority Abbas demands UN Security Council intervention" (Government-owned Tishreen, 6/10)

"Syria denounces the Israeli massacre in Gaza and calls for enhancing Palestinian national unity" (Government-owned Tishreen, 6/11)

"Palestinians bury their martyrs and call for an end to brutal Israeli practices" (Government-owned Tishreen, 6/11)

"US troops launch 40 raids. Iraqi PM Al-Maliki: The Iraqi government has become more dynamic after Al-Zarqawi's death" (Government-owned Tishreen, 6/10)

"Brammertz, Head of the UN investigation Commission into the assassination of former Lebanese Prime Minister Al-Hariri, turns in his report to UN Chief Annan: Syrian cooperation is positive and fully satisfactory" (Government-owned Al-Ba'th, 6/11)

13. Editorial Block Quotes:

"Dangers and A Required Position"

Isam Dari, an editorialist in government-owned Tishreen, wrote on (6/10): "The visit to Syria by Bahraini King Hamad Bin Khalifah Al Thani and the visits by senior Syrian officials to Arab countries are part of Arab efforts to achieve Arab solidarity and develop common Arab action. Arabs realize the threats that the Arab nation is facing, especially since the enemy no longer hides its intentions and hostility toward the Arabs. All Arabs agree that Iraq must remain a united country and that the Palestinian people must regain their rights in full....

"The Arab situation is undoubtedly difficult and complicated, requiring the highest level of solidarity, cohesion, and cooperation in all areas to confront dangers and challenges. All Arabs are in the same boat and no one of them should tamper with this boat or shirk the pan-Arab responsibility under the feeble excuse that he is not threatened or targeted. Israel's security zone covers all Arab countries and some neighboring countries, and Tel Aviv leaders have the 'right' to launch aggression against any Arab country if it merely says that such country poses a threat to its security and existence...."

"Al-Zarqawi's Bubble Will Not Last for Long"

Hanan Hamad, a commentator in government-owned Tishreen, wrote (6/10): "By killing Al-Zarqawi with half a ton of explosives dropped by an American bomber on a hideout where he and six others, including a woman and child, were staying, President Bush and his administration officials might have succeeded in diverting attention from the crisis of the President's control over the administration. But the breath-catching period will not be long, and the series of scandals will reemerge one after the other when Al-Zarqawi's bubble breaks, a bubble that the American media inflated before and after his death to hide the occupation's responsibility for everything that has been happening in Iraq since the first American soldier set foot on Iraqi soil. The occupation has turned Iraq into an arena for violence and chaos. The legitimate resistance operations against the foreign presence were distorted when they were confused with the crimes that terrorists and instigators of sectarian violence and sedition committed within a plan that the planners of the American policy did not deny, a plan that they promoted under the name of 'creative chaos,' which, they believed, would help them realize their imperial 'Greater Middle East' project....

"When the clamor over the Al-Zarqawi death, which President Bush described as an object of pride for the American people, subsides, the spotlight will certainly return to its natural object: the violations of the occupation and its soldiers. The joy over the false victory will fade and the criticism of US domestic and foreign policies will continue to come from every

direction. The officials of the administration and those who are promoting its policies will return to the defense barricades, threatening international law and conventions with despotism of American power. We will again hear threats like those that US Ambassador John Bolton made on the eve of Al-Zarqawi's death, when he threatened to stop funding the United Nations because Deputy Secretary General Mark Malloch dared to criticize US policy and say that Washington seeks to use the international organization as a diplomatic instrument and at the same time fails to defend it.

"The US Administration will return to defend secret and flying prisons, torture, and violation of the Geneva conventions, and to disdain the international reports that condemn its violations. It will defend the war crimes that its soldiers commit daily and systematically in Iraq by circumventing international agreements without any embarrassment or hesitation. And, naturally, the occupation will maintain its true image, and all attempts to beautify it will fail, no matter how skillful they may be. But the only victims of all this are the peoples, security, and stability of this region."

"Does War Have Any Ethics?"

Muhammad Ali Buzah, an editorialist in government-owned Al-Thawra, commented (6/9): "All the noise in the United States about the ethics of the Iraq war following the revelations of the Haditha massacre was unable to absorb the wave of anger and ease the state of tension that prevail in the region and the Iraqi and international arenas, or to lessen the growing hatred toward US policy, which adopts confrontation and clash with the world as its doctrine....

"We doubt that the investigations into the massacre will harm senior military officials or introduce changes in American policy.... The US Administration turned Iraq, just like Palestine and Afghanistan, into fields of experiment and grounds for death and violation of human dignity. And like its spoiled baby, Israel, it exercised its sadism and democracy with brutality and rancorous racism....

"The only way for Washington to save face is to rush to set a

timetable for withdrawal from Iraq and leave the people of this country, along with the peoples of Palestine, Afghanistan, and many others, free to determine their future and destiny without foreign interference and rebuild what the dirty American-Zionist war has destroyed.... Also, Washington must deal with all aspects of aggression, coercion, occupation, and genocidal and cowardly killing of civilians as war crimes that cannot be forgiven or go unpunished."

"Useless Controversy"

Adnan Ali, a commentator in government-owned Al-Thawra, wrote (6/9): "The controversy in the Palestinian territories over the prisoners' document is useless because it will have no direct political impact on the Palestinian situation, especially the proposed negotiations with Israel....

"The Palestinian debate, which has reached the point of physical conflict, over the recognition of Israel is taking place at a time when Israel has finalized its unilateral disengagement plan and is preparing to implement it publicly.... Israel, in fact, does not need HAMAS's recognition. Israel itself does not respect the agreements it signed with the Palestinians. This is a major trick the Palestinians need to overcome, and they must focus on building Palestinian national unity based on the domestic Palestinian agenda, not on foreign suggestions and dictates...."

Johnson-Casares